

**December 1, 2014**

Welcome back. It is my hope that everyone had a restful Thanksgiving holiday filled with family, food and fun. Although we just came back from a nice, week-long break, it seems unreal to think that we only have three more weeks before we take another well-deserved two weeks of rest and relaxation. With that in mind, it is up to each of us to commit ourselves to assisting all of our students on staying focused these next three weeks. The learning opportunities we create for them will surely help them one day become contributing members of our community and competitive beyond the city limits of Del Rio, TX.

Reflecting on what happened the week prior to our break and pondering on what is to come, gives me plenty of satisfaction and a sense of excitement. On the Monday prior to the holidays we had a highly productive School Board meeting. Our Board approved the final phase of the [CTE Academy](#) and the [Student Activity Center/Administration Building](#). I am hopeful we will begin construction in the early spring. At Monday's Board Meeting our Board also approved the hiring of [Mr. Leslie Hayegna](#), Director of Technology, and [Dr. Sandra Zuniga-Mendoza](#), Instructional Technology Coordinator. I am extremely proud of the work and accomplishments of our technology department, but I am equally excited about new beginnings.

Tuesday, I had the opportunity to participate with staff from [Calderon](#) and [Cardwell](#) Elementary as they received a reward from HEB representatives for achieving the highest participation in the HEB Read 3 program. The [students](#) were excited and had different suggestions on how to spend their gift certificates. I think some ice cream is coming their way. My Tuesday ended with my favorite guy and his favorite sport. I had the opportunity to see my [son](#) participate in a JV basketball game and then saw [varsity](#) give San Angelo Central a run for their money. Best of luck to Coach Billy [Ramey](#) and our [boys](#) as they work towards what surely will be a great season.

Wednesday and Thursday was mainly dedicated to eating; a favorite of mine as well. I visited various campuses while they enjoyed their Thanksgiving celebration. At [Lamar](#) Elementary I had the opportunity to join some teachers in a delicious catered meal. It is always nice to see teachers sit together and enjoy each other's company. I always appreciate visiting my daughter's campus, [Buena Vista Elementary](#), and all the [familiar faces](#) that turn out for their annual Thanksgiving lunch. They most likely had the highest participation, but still managed to let me have two desserts. Nonetheless, I have to give high props to Cardwell Elementary. Their [welcoming committee](#), the [parents](#) that sat with their children, and the work the teachers did to introduce the [students](#) to the concept of Thanksgiving was entirely exceptional. If I had a Thanksgiving trophy, I would give it to Cardwell.

Thursday was entirely rewarding. I had a chance to enjoy many opportunities of teaching and learning. First, I stopped by DRMS and saw a vast amount of wonderful [science projects](#). The best part of the visit was seeing members from the [Laughlin](#) AFB community participate. The top 15 students from DRMS will then compete in the Alamo Regional Science Fair in February. Best of luck to them. While I was at DRMS, I also had the opportunity to visit and completely be impressed by the [dancing techniques](#) that were taught in the dance class.

Next, I stopped by Garfield Elementary and asked the principal to show me an example of Guided Reading instruction. She took me to Mrs. Cura's second grade class. What I saw was entirely impressive. Mrs. Cura worked on [phonics](#) with a small group of students, while three other groups operated independently in [reading](#), [writing](#), and [grammar](#) activities. I am certain that Guided Reading and Guided Math practices are the best way to provide differentiation within the day. Although they require meticulous pre-planning, there is so much to gain from meeting individual student needs.

Next, I stopped by the C&I building where I witnessed the majority of our [elementary math teachers](#) go the extra mile and meet for the first time as a collaborative team. Although math teachers at most of our elementary campuses have colleagues within their campuses in which to share ideas and plan with, the purpose of this monthly training is to allow math teachers to collaborate as a [District team](#); to discuss new concepts, ways of teaching, gaps and areas of concerns, and team up to share what is working and what is needed to spiral back in. Facilitated by [Instructional Coaches](#), teachers received their curriculum documents and shared ideas for the upcoming six weeks. It was extremely nice to see three rooms filled with conversations about math instruction for grades 3-5. Thank you for dedicating additional time to this C&I initiative.

Thursday came to an end at the [Elementary Cross Country meet](#). Not only did I get to see Coach Rick Smith and his volunteer [coaches](#) put on this wonderful [event](#) for our [students](#), I also got to visit with some pretty wonderful [friends](#). Seeing so many [elementary students](#) participate and become [excited](#) about the annual Elementary Cross Country meet is a clear indication of the success our Cross Country program will continue to enjoy. Coach Smith provides clear evidence that building a program can be [fun](#)!

The week ended with a trip to Calallen High School in Corpus Christi, TX. Before hitting the highway, I along with many parents and community members, stopped by to share well wishes to Ms. Kayla Lopez and her [Pom Squad](#) before their departure to New York where they participated in the [Macy's Day Parade](#). It is so wonderful that our students were able to raise enough funds to represent our community and create an experience that will be remembered for a lifetime. Along this same note, two of our very own high school drummers also participated in this event. Excellent way of representing SFDRICISD and our great community.

In Corpus Christi, I along with hundreds of [fans](#) and student [organizations](#), saw our Ram [Football](#) team compete in what was one of the most exciting games of the season. Unfortunately the time ran out, but not before our students showed us what true grit is all about. Congratulations to [Coach McCrea](#), his staff, our [Football Boosters](#), and our students on a wonderful season.

*A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning. – Brad Henry*